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ABSTRACT

This study at a medium-sized academic library was based on the assumption that usage of the pamphlet collection could be increased by weeding to create a smaller more accessible collection, reorganization to create a more browsable collection, and promotion to increase reference librarians' awareness of the collection's contents. Approximately 10,000 of the 17,000 pamphlets in the general collection were weeded by January 1978, the remaining pamphlets were reorganized into a revised set of subject categories, and in-house promotion was increased. The study was conducted over three 4-month periods: September-December 1977, February-May 1978, and February-May 1979, with usage measured by the number of shelf displacements of each pamphlet during the test periods. Patrons were instructed not to reshelve materials and as each item was reshelved by staff, its use was tallied by subject category. Use of the collection did increase significantly over the three time periods, although no consistent use pattern within subject categories was discerned. Appendices provide a list of subject categories and instructions for users of the pamphlet collection. (RAA)

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PAMPHLET USAGE IN A MEDIUM-SIZED ACADEMIC LIBRARY

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California State University, Fullerton, established in 1960, has a student body of approximately 21,000 students, 15,000 FTE. The University Library occupied its present building in 1966. Since the university's founding, the library's collection has grown to approximately 500,000 books, 275,000 government documents (U.S., state and international) and 450,000 microforms.

Pamphlet collections, located at various spots in the library, contain approximately 50,000 pamphlets. The use study described in this paper only measured use of pamphlets housed in the reference area of the library. At the beginning of the study, there were about 17,000 pamphlets in this general pamphlet collection.

The arrangement of the general pamphlet collection is somewhat unusual in that all pamphlets are filed on single-faced shelving against one wall of the reference area. At the beginning of the study they were filed in alphabetical order by subject. Subject headings assigned were Library of Congress, augmented in some cases by natural language headings. There was a subject authority file with appropriate see and see also references and a small booklet which grouped subject headings into broader subject categories, such as "Contemporary Issues," "International Relations," etc.

THE STUDY

In July, 1977, the author was given responsibility for the general pamphlet collection. This included selection, ordering, assigning subject headings, weeding and evaluation. Little was known at that time of the actual use received by the collection but it appeared that such use was sporadic, at best. In order to understand better the actual use of the collection and which subject areas received the most or least use it was decided to conduct a use

study of the collection. It was theorized that pamphlet usage was relatively low and that use could be increased by 1.) thoroughly weeding the collection, thereby making the collection more current and accessible than were the previously jammed shelves; 2.) arranging the pamphlets in a different format; and 3.) conducting a "pamphlet awareness" promotion among reference librarians and staff.

The study was conducted over three four-month periods: September-December, 1977; February - May, 1978; and February - May, 1979. Use was measured by shelf-displacement, i.e., each time a pamphlet was moved from its original position was counted as one use. Special signs were mounted throughout the collection instructing users to return pamphlets to one spot, rather than reshelving them. As with using any such displacement criterion, some problems could and did arise. One cannot, of course, tell if a pamphlet was actually "used" solely by displacement. It may have been glanced at casually and tossed aside. In fact, this probably happened to a fairly large number of pamphlets in the initial measuring period of the study when all the pamphlets with the subject headings "Women" and "Women - U.S." were found off the shelf. This concerned a total of 93 pamphlets and while it is highly unlikely that they were all "used," according to the criterion of shelf-displacement all 93 had to be counted as such. Despite this and similar problems, shelf displacement was deemed the only feasible and most effective way to measure use.

As each pamphlet used was shelved, that use was tallied by subject category. A complete list of subject categories is included in Appendix A. During the initial time period of the study, weeding of the collection continued and was finally completed in January, 1978. Approximately 10,000

pamphlets were weeded. Those pamphlets remaining were those four or fewer years old or those with exceptional topicality or high graphic values. The reorganization of the collection into the previously mentioned subject categories also occurred in January.

Each subject category was prominently signed to enhance browsability and accessibility. The subject authority file was updated and a new booklet (Appendix B) written describing the changed format of the collection and listing each subject heading within the various categories. Each pamphlet was given a one or two letter designation indicating to which section it belonged. Increased in-house promotion of the collection was also conducted to heighten awareness of the collection's contents and its potential reference use. As part of that promotion, a system was devised to give reference staff the opportunity to examine all new pamphlets before thay were added to the collection.

The study continued during the Spring, 1978, semester, again measuring use by shelf-displacement. It was planned originally to continue the use study during Fall, 1978, but post-Jarvis budgetary uncertainties, e.g., lack of student employee funds, made such a continuation impossible. However, as budget constraints had loosened somewhat by January, 1979, the study was resumed for the Spring, 1979, semester.

STUDY RESULTS

Pamphlet usage did increase over the study period. Total usage climbed from 896 pamphlets for the initial time period to 1,115 and 1,152 for the succeeding periods (Table A). This was an increase of 24% and 28%, respectively. Pamphlet circulation, however, did not change significantly (Table B).

Table A

TOTAL USAGE

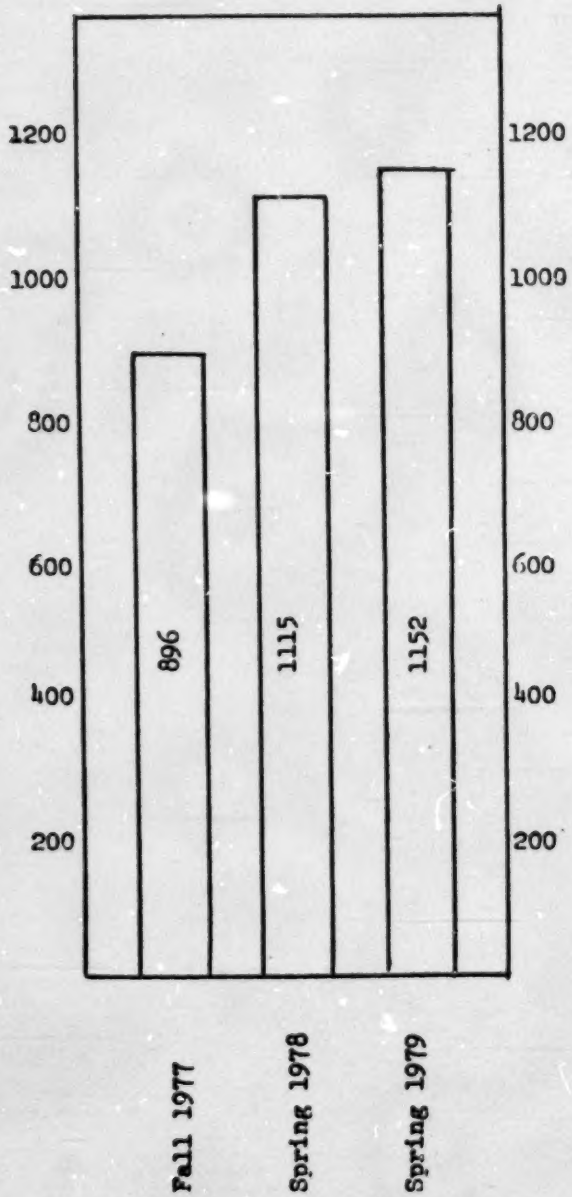
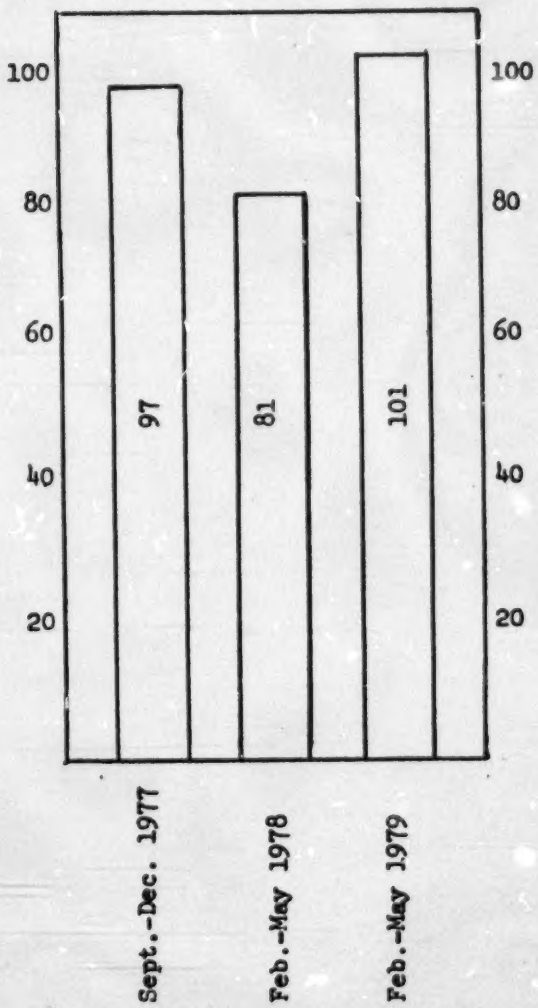


Table B

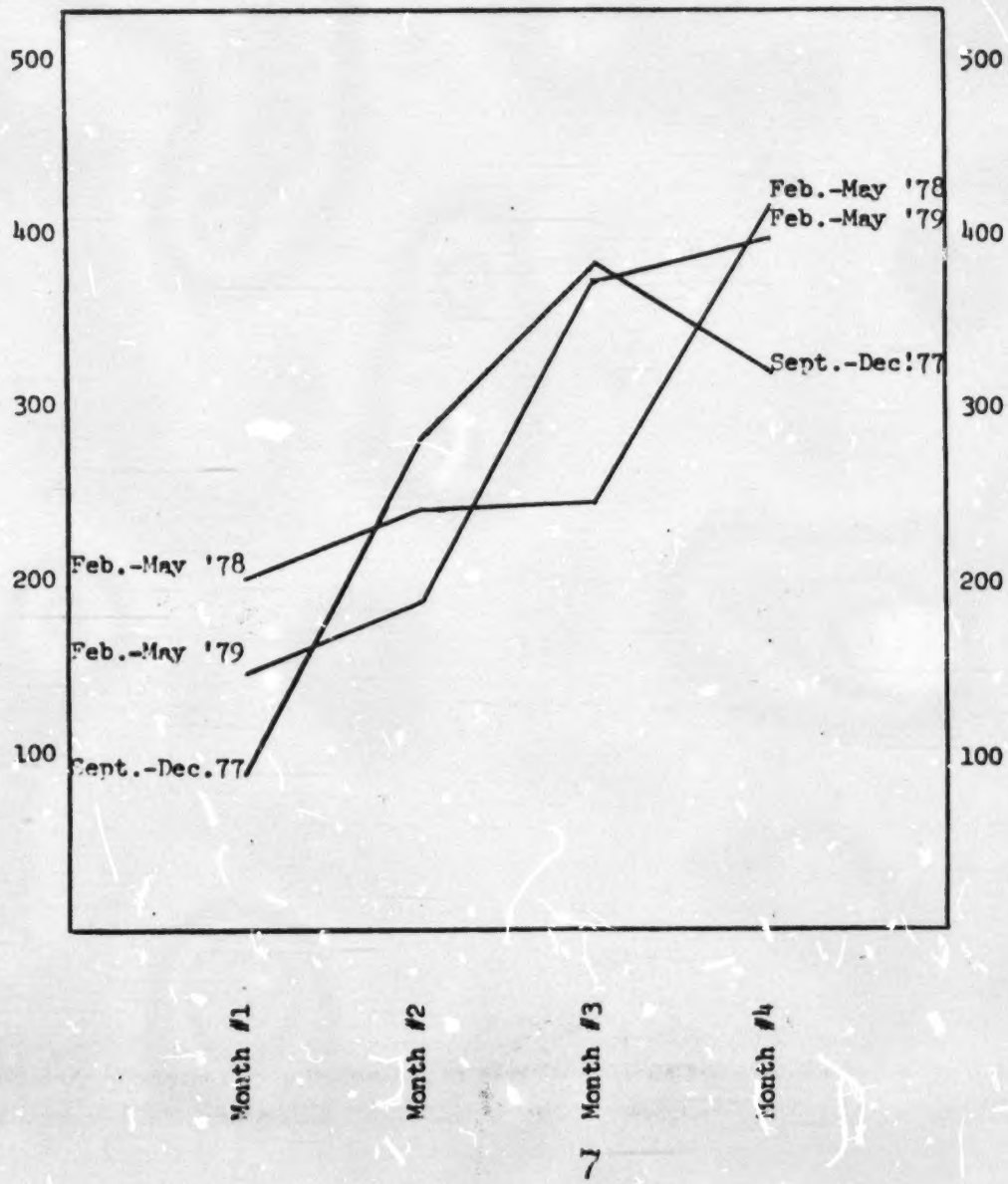
PAMPHLET CIRCULATION



As might have been expected, pamphlet usage generally increased each month of the three time periods with the exception of December, 1977, when usage dropped from that of November (Table C). Such usage patterns can probably be attributed to the general semester study pattern where library usage increases as the pressure of papers and classes increases towards the end of each semester.

Table C

TOTAL PAMPHLET USAGE BY MONTH



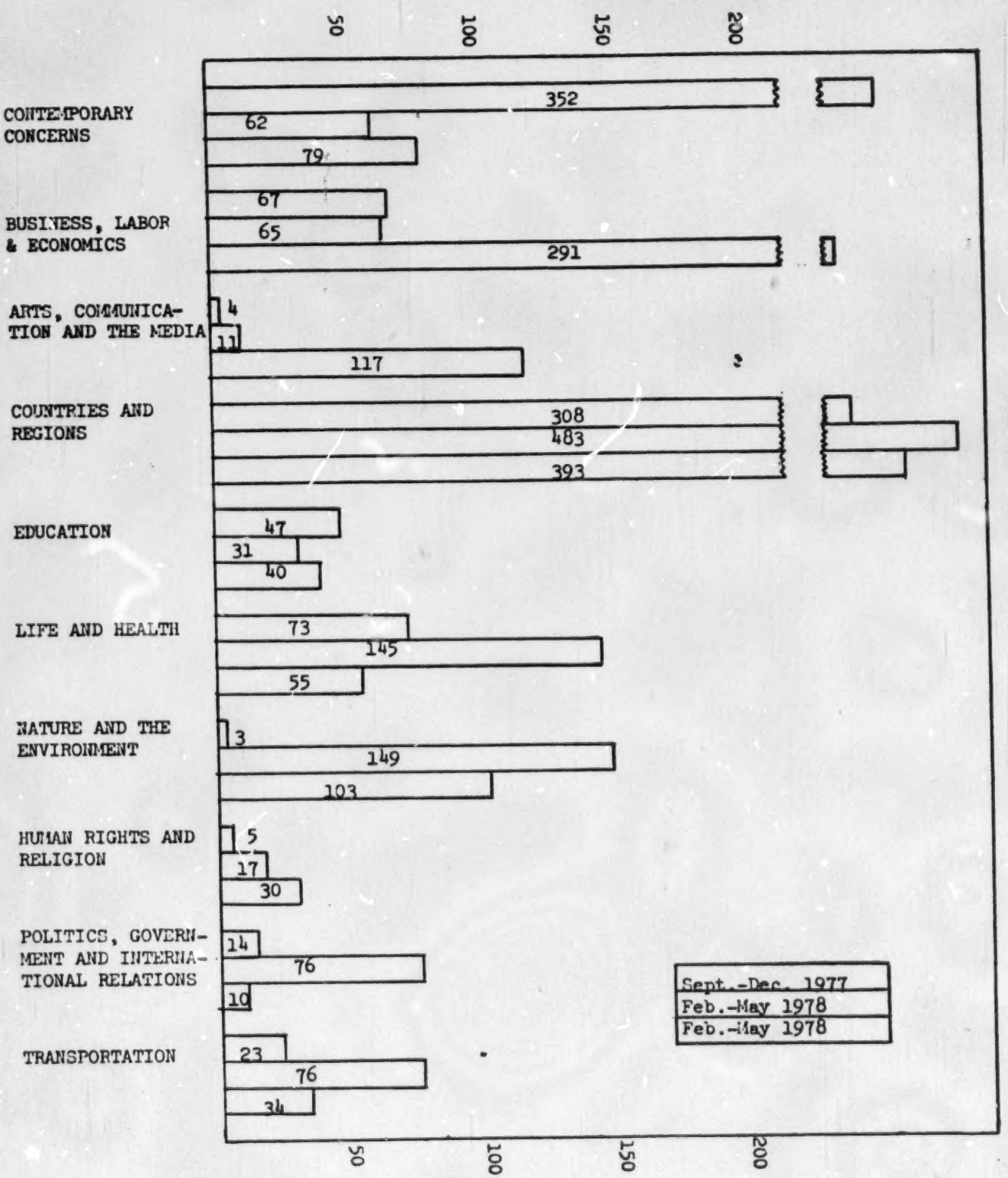
One possible result of the use study was the elimination of little-used categories and a subsequent concentration on the more highly-used ones. Table D clearly illustrates how such a determination cannot be made from the study. While total usage was fairly consistent, usage within different categories varied widely. Two of the most extreme examples would be the categories "Contemporary Concerns" which went from 352 to 62 to 79 uses and "Nature and the Environment" which went from 3 to 149 to 103 uses.

CONCLUSION

Use of the general Pamphlet Collection did increase significantly over the three time periods. Such an increase can probably be attributed to three factors: weeding - which created a smaller, more accessible collection; reorganization - which created a more browsable collection; and promotion - which increased Reference awareness of the collection's contents.

The use study did present some implications for the future. Since no consistent use pattern within subject categories was discerned, collection development should be continued within all such categories. Since pamphlet circulation was relatively low, such circulation should be encouraged through a more aggressive signing policy. Since use did increase upon reorganization, the present format should probably be continued.

Whether due to reorganization, weeding or promotion, use of the Pamphlet Collection did undergo a significant change. The effort involved in this project could then be termed worthwhile and a similar program should possibly be considered by other libraries interested in increasing use of this valuable and often overlooked resource.


50
100
150
200
CONTEMPORARY CONCERNS
352
62
79
BUSINESS, LABOR & ECONOMICS
67
65
291
ARTS, COMMUNICATION AND THE MEDIA
4
11
117
COUNTRIES AND REGIONS
308
483
393
EDUCATION
47
31
40
LIFE AND HEALTH
73
145
55
NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT
3
149
103
HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGION
5
17
30
POLITICS, GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
14
76
10
TRANSPORTATION
23
76
34
Sept.-Dec. 1977
Feb.-May 1978
Feb.-May 1978
PAMPHLET USE BY CATEGORY

Appendix A

SUBJECT CATEGORIES

Arts, Communication and the Media

Business, Labor and Economics

Contemporary Concerns

Countries and Regions

Education

Human Rights and Religion

Life and Health

Nature and the Environment

Politics, Government and International Relations

Transportation

United States

California

Appendix B

USING THE PAMPHLET COLLECTION

May, 1978

Appendix B

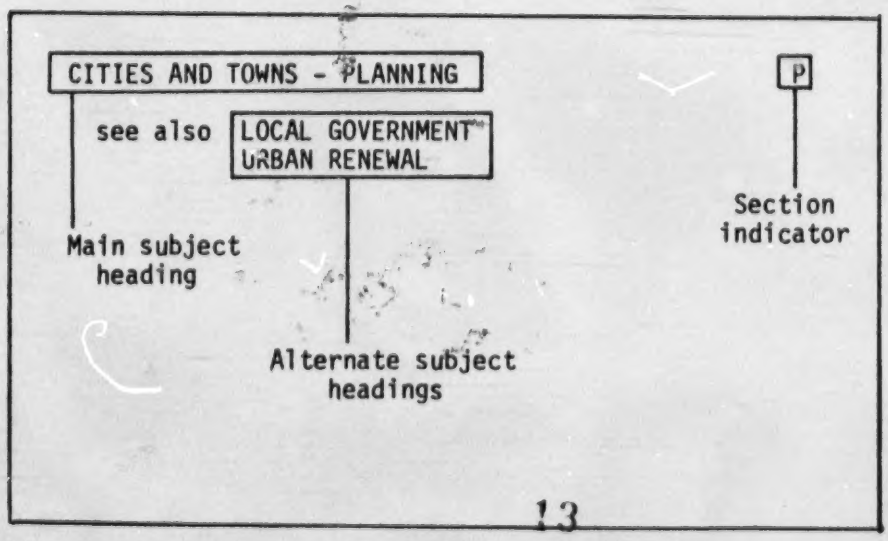
The Pamphlet Collection in the CSUF Library is composed of pamphlets and other ephemeral material published primarily within the last four years. Most of the materials within the collection represent up-to-date information on specific subjects of topical interest.

The collection has been designed for easy browsing, i.e., so that pamphlets of related interest will be grouped together. For instance, pamphlets dealing with various aspects of the energy crisis are found under the subject headings "Energy," "Oil," "Nuclear Science" and "Power Resources," among others. These subject headings can all be found under the broad category NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

The Pamphlet Collection is divided into 12 broad subject categories, listed on the following pages as they are located in the collection, reading from right to left. Within each category, subjects are arranged alphabetically. Even though many pamphlets are concerned with more than one subject, each pamphlet has been assigned only one subject heading. Because of this, you should look at related subject headings to insure complete coverage of a topic.

This booklet lists the subject headings in use within the broader categories as of May, 1978. As new pamphlets arrive whose contents are not reflected in these subject headings, new headings will be assigned.

Before using the Pamphlet Collection, it is usually advisable to consult the "subject authority" file located in the lower right hand drawer of the Reference Card Catalog labelled "Pamphlets." This lists all subject headings in use and will direct the user to alternate appropriate headings. In addition, each card in the drawer will indicate within which section of the collection pamphlets on that topic will be found. For instance, in the example below the subject heading is "Cities and Towns - Planning" and is located in Section P, i.e., POLITICS, GOVERNMENT, AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. In addition, persons interested in city planning should also look at the pamphlets found under the subject headings "Local Government" and "Urban Renewal" for materials of related interest.



If you have any difficulty in using the Pamphlet Collection, please ask at the Reference Desk for assistance.

Pamphlets may be checked out of the library. Ask at the check-out counter on the first floor.